

Spend Your FEMA Money Wisely

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Cape Girardeau, MO – More than 320 Missourians already have received more than **\$1.8 million** in grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to help pay for disaster-related needs such as housing, replacing essential personal property and more.

What's the next thing a FEMA grant recipient should know? How to properly spend that money.

When FEMA awards disaster grants under its Individual and Households Program, recipients also receive a Determination Letter detailing the purpose(s) for which the money should be spent.

Pay attention to that letter, officials say.

“It’s important for those receiving these grants to remember that the funds are from our fellow taxpayers and are intended to help eligible Missourians recover from this disaster,” said David Gervino, FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer. “That means this money should be spent for the disaster-related purposes identified by FEMA.”

Recipients also can call the FEMA Helpline at 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) for more information about the letter and/or detailed purpose of the assistance.

Federal disaster assistance to individuals and households can help those impacted by the severe weather to help pay for disaster-related repairs to their houses, replace essential personal property, provide for serious needs such as household essentials and toiletries, and to pay for another place to live. Eligible survivors who need accessibility equipment also may benefit from this funding.

The grants do not have to be repaid. Recipients should save all receipts associated with the FEMA funds for at least three years in case of a random audit of how the money was spent.



If the money is used for anything other than its intended purpose, it could risk future disaster assistance or trigger repayment of the funds.

To be considered for FEMA funding, individuals, households and self-employed business owners must have sustained losses during the May 19-27 severe storms, straight-line winds, tornadoes and flooding, and live in one of these 10 Missouri counties: Barry, Butler, Carter, Howell, New Madrid, Ripley, Scott, Shannon, Stoddard and Texas.

FEMA says the first step survivors should take is to register with the agency. Registrations or applications with other agencies or organizations such as the American Red Cross do not transfer over to FEMA. You need a specific FEMA application.

There are 3 ways to apply:

- Online: www.disasterassistance.gov
- Phone: 800-621-FEMA (3362)
- Download and use the [FEMA app](#)

Anyone using a relay service, such as video relay service (VRS), captioned telephone service or others, can give FEMA the number for that service. FEMA also can connect survivors by phone with language interpreters who can help complete their application or answer questions.

Once a person has applied with FEMA, the next step often is a house inspection if there was damage to the primary residence. A FEMA inspector will make an appointment with the homeowner, come to the damaged dwelling, gather information and document the extent and scope of the damage. The inspection is free, and the homeowner needs to be present for the inspection and should be prepared to prove occupancy with a document such as a utility bill.

Renters are eligible for FEMA assistance as well to get help with housing assistance if they are displaced, replacing essential personal property such as primary vehicles, certain appliances, beds and other items. Renters use the same application process.

Those who are self-employed also may be eligible for assistance repairing or replacing disaster-damaged tools and equipment that are needed to do their jobs.



For more disaster-related information, visit the Missouri State Emergency Management Agency online at www.sema.dps.mo.gov or FEMA at www.fema.gov and www.fema.gov/disaster/4803.



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